

June 14, 2017

Dear EMS Provider,

The Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) is working with the Georgia Poison Center and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) on a cluster of opioid overdoses and possible related deaths that have occurred in Middle Georgia since June 3, 2017. This is the largest cluster of known opioid overdoses in Georgia and a serious public health crisis.

Patients reportedly purchased yellow pills on the street that are purported to be Percocet. One identifying mark indicating the pills are counterfeit is the Percocet stamp on the fake pills is at a slight angle. The pills are extremely potent and patients have required massive doses of naloxone to counteract the effects.

On Tuesday, June 13, 2017, GBI Crime Lab analysis confirmed that the pills contain a mixture of two synthetic opioids, cyclopropyl fentanyl and U-47700. Cyclopropyl fentanyl is a fentanyl analogue that is chemically similar to fentanyl. Cyclopropyl fentanyl has not previously been seen in Georgia. It is unknown how the human body will react to this drug since it is not intended for human or veterinary use. Both of these drugs are **HIGHLY DANGEROUS** and should not be handled. They can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin and are extremely toxic in even the smallest quantities.

We estimate the number of overdoses to be approximately 30, including five deaths that may be related to the counterfeit pills. These numbers are fluid due to incomplete confirmatory testing. In addition, as treating facilities are able to interview patients, a case originally thought to be related may ultimately be determined to be unrelated.

As your Commissioner of Public Health, I am writing to stress the importance of early recognition of symptoms and the need for decisive action when a patient presents. DPH and the Georgia Poison Center have developed guidelines for patients who may have ingested the yellow pills and require transport to hospital emergency departments. I am sharing this same information with all Georgia EMS Providers because of the critical need for awareness among all of us, and to appropriately track these cases and gain better understanding of the scope of the problem.

If a patient meeting the following criteria requires transport:

- 1) Patient presents with an opioid toxidrome requiring resuscitation, ventilation, and/or naloxone for reversal of symptoms.
- 2) Exposure history that may involve "purchasing pills off the street" or like-story.



Exposure history that may involve the ingestion of a **SMALL** quantity of the suspect pills resulting in **BIG** symptoms. (e.g., the ingestion of 1-2 suspect tablets producing sudden onset of CNS, RESPIRATORY, CARDIOVASCULAR depression).

Please ensure the following:

- 1) These patients require Naloxone, often titrating to higher than normal doses, to reverse the effects of the opioid.
- 2) Please notify the hospital ED that this patient may be related to the counterfeit Percocet cluster. To appropriately track these cases, it is highly recommended that the Georgia Poison Center be notified of all cases suspected to be related to this outbreak of overdoses

If a pill is found on a patient:

- 1) Wear adequate PPE when handling the substance.
- 2) Specific recommendations from the GBI include double gloving, gown, n95 mask and goggles.
- 3) Double bag the substance with a bio-hazard label on the outside and handle per agency protocol.

For any additional questions please call the Georgia Poison Center at **1-800-222-1222** or **404-616-9000**.

DPH will continue to monitor this situation and provide updates as they are warranted.

Thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,



Brenda Fitzgerald, M.D.
Commissioner and State Health Officer